



TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT

Memorial Town Hall
2372 Whitney Avenue
Hamden, CT 06518

Fire Commission Minutes

Regular Meeting

6:00 PM, October 21, 2026

[Click to View Agenda](#)

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Commissioner G. Tinney at 6:04 PM.

2. ATTENDANCE

The roll was taken by the Clerk, and the following members were:

Present:

Commissioner Gary Tinney, Chair
Commissioner Robert Mordecai
Commissioner Thomas A. Madera

Absent

Commissioner Nancy Jordan
Commissioner Samod Rankins

Also present were Chief Shelly Carter of the Hamden Fire Department and Briana J. Belton-Robinson, BC Clerk, along with Assistant Chief Jeramine Atkinson and Battalion Chief Paul Kobbe.

Roll Call Summary: Present, Voting 3, Present, Not Voting 0, Absent 2, Excused 0.

3. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner R. Mordecai made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 2nd, 2026 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner T. Madera.

The motion passed.

Vote: All in favor, no nays, no abstentions. The previous meeting minutes were adopted unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Commissioner G. Tinney opened the floor for public comment.

No public comments were received.

5. CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE FIRE CHIEF

Fire Chief S. Carter provided the Commission with a departmental update addressing administrative leadership, staffing, recruitment, community risk reduction, training, and departmental operations.

Appointment of Assistant Fire Chief

Chief S. Carter formally introduced Assistant Fire Chief J. Atkinson, who was appointed on October 13, 2026. Assistant Chief J. Atkinson brings approximately 25 years of fire service experience and most recently served as Fire Chief of Stratford, Connecticut.

Chief S. Carter stated that Assistant Chief J. Atkinson has begun visiting fire stations, accompanying Battalion Chiefs, and reviewing departmental administrative responsibilities. His appointment is expected to strengthen communication, officer development, operational oversight, and administrative efficiency.

Chief S. Carter acknowledged the assistance of the Battalion Chiefs, who have assumed additional leadership responsibilities during the Department's period of reduced administrative staffing.

Assistant Chief J. Atkinson thanked the Commission for the opportunity to serve and expressed his commitment to becoming familiar with departmental operations, engaging with personnel, and supporting continued improvements.

Personnel and Staffing

Chief S. Carter reported six departmental vacancies: four line positions and two administrative positions. These include two EMT positions, two paramedic positions, the Fire Marshal position, and the Deputy Fire Marshal position.

The Department is working with Human Resources to fill the vacancies through established recruitment procedures.

Chief S. Carter also discussed the possibility of lateral transfers for qualified firefighters. She noted that hiring experienced personnel could reduce the approximately \$ 9,000-per-recruit cost of firefighter training.

Fire Marshal's Office

Chief S. Carter reported that Fire Marshal Brian Dolan recently retired and that Brian Gilson is serving as Acting Fire Marshal.

The Fire Marshal's Office continues its responsibilities despite staffing shortages. Chief S. Carter acknowledged the Acting Fire Marshal, fire inspector, and administrative personnel for maintaining office operations.

Recruitment for the Fire Marshal and Deputy Fire Marshal positions continues.

Community Risk Reduction and Public Education

Chief S. Carter discussed the Department's continued emphasis on community risk reduction and expanding public education beyond school-age children to include families, adults, and senior residents.

The Department is developing seasonal fire safety outreach initiatives addressing Halloween safety, holiday cooking hazards, Christmas tree safety, and other preventable emergencies.

The Department will distribute educational materials through fire apparatus, community organizations, churches, restaurants, and other locations throughout Hamden.

Chief S. Carter also discussed strengthening partnerships with senior services and other municipal agencies to assist vulnerable residents, including individuals experiencing unsafe living conditions.

Community Engagement

Chief S. Carter reported attending a First Responders Mass and Green Harvest Sunday services, where she discussed fire prevention and community risk reduction.

She expressed interest in expanding partnerships with faith-based organizations to provide fire safety education, CPR awareness, and additional community services.

Chief S. Carter also recognized the personnel at Fire Station 2 for preparing Halloween decorations and engaging with the community.

Training, Equipment, and Departmental Operations

Chief S. Carter reported continued progress in officer development, departmental training, policy updates, and implementation of the Department's new records management system.

The Department is also evaluating equipment replacement needs, including rescue apparatus, a tower ladder truck, staff vehicles, and significant fire station maintenance concerns.

Chief S. Carter emphasized that aging apparatus and vehicles present operational and safety concerns and that replacing outdated equipment remains a departmental priority.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

(if recommended by the town attorney)

No Executive Session was held.

7. REPORTS

A. Report of the Chairman

Firefighter Occupational Cancer Awareness and Legislative Advocacy

Chairman G. Tinney discussed his recent travels throughout the country and expressed concern regarding the increasing number of firefighters diagnosed with various cancers associated with occupational exposures.

Chairman G. Tinney stated that firefighters encounter hazardous substances and environmental exposures throughout their careers, some of which may contribute to long-term health complications.

He reported working with other individuals and organizations to research firefighter occupational cancers, identify support resources, and advocate for federal legislation addressing firefighter health and safety.

Chairman G. Tinney referenced federal legislative efforts involving Senator Cory Booker and Congressman Darren Soto intended to strengthen protections and resources for firefighters affected by occupational cancers.

He emphasized the importance of supporting firefighters throughout their careers and ensuring that personnel receive appropriate recognition, respect, and protection.

Sound Off Fire Safety Education Program

Chairman G. Tinney provided an update on the Sound Off program, a national interactive fire safety education initiative designed for school-age children.

He explained that the program includes an educational curriculum delivered through classroom teachers, incorporating interactive exercises and activities to teach children about fire prevention, smoke alarms, and home safety.

The program also encourages students to share fire safety information with parents, grandparents, and other household members.

Chairman G. Tinney reported that approximately 170 smoke detectors equipped with 10-year batteries will be distributed through the program's outreach efforts.

He further reported that the Superintendent of Hamden Public Schools had contacted him regarding the initiative and expressed interest in its implementation.

Chairman G. Tinney stated that he would provide Commissioners with additional program materials, including curriculum information and educational posters.

B. Personnel Roster

Chief S. Carter reviewed departmental staffing levels and recruitment efforts.

The Department currently has four line vacancies and two vacancies in the Fire Marshal's Office.

Chief S. Carter reported that the Department employs 18 paramedics, with one

currently without medical control authorization.

She explained that the next two positions to be filled are expected to require paramedic qualifications.

The Department continues working with Human Resources to evaluate recruitment opportunities, including lateral transfers, while maintaining compliance with municipal hiring requirements.

C. Fire Marshall Office Report

Deputy Fire Marshal Recruitment and Promotional Opportunities

Commissioner R. Mordecai raised concerns regarding the recruitment process for the Deputy Fire Marshal position.

Commissioner R. Mordecai stated that he attended a Civil Service Commission meeting and learned that the Town was considering external applicants for the position.

He questioned why the Department was recruiting outside the organization when internal personnel may be interested in advancement opportunities.

Commissioner R. Mordecai expressed concern that requiring applicants to have attained the rank of Lieutenant or Captain could limit opportunities for otherwise qualified firefighters seeking career advancement.

He said he had contacted the union about the availability of internal candidates and asked how the Department could effectively retain personnel if promotional opportunities were not available from within.

Chief S. Carter responded that the recruitment process must comply with the Town of Hamden's Civil Service rules, applicable collective bargaining agreements, and established hiring procedures.

She explained that Civil Service determines the appropriate recruitment process and that the Fire Chief does not independently control those decisions.

Chief S. Carter reported that the Deputy Fire Marshal recruitment process included 11 applicants: two internal and nine external.

She stated that the Deputy Fire Marshal job description was established in 2014 under the administration of then-Acting Fire Chief David Berardesca. The position's existing qualifications include rank and professional experience requirements.

Chief S. Carter explained that she did not believe it appropriate to independently lower established qualifications solely to expand the applicant pool.

She further stated that Human Resources was reviewing whether applicable time-in-grade provisions or other established procedures could give internal applicants additional consideration.

Chief S. Carter offered to meet with Commissioner R. Mordecai and union representatives that evening or the following morning to discuss their concerns and clarify the recruitment process.

She said she would share additional information from Human Resources with the Commission.

D. Good and Welfare of the Department

Departmental Leadership and Administrative Responsibilities

Chief S. Carter discussed the challenges of overseeing departmental operations while serving without an Assistant Fire Chief for approximately two years.

She said that managing personnel, developing policies, coordinating training, addressing safety concerns, overseeing equipment needs, and maintaining community engagement placed significant demands on the Office of the Fire Chief.

Chief S. Carter emphasized that the appointment of Assistant Chief J. Atkinson will allow for a more effective distribution of administrative and operational responsibilities.

She said her goal is to improve departmental communication, strengthen personnel support, maintain operational readiness, and ensure firefighters have the resources needed to perform their duties safely.

Department Mechanics and Maintenance Staffing

Commissioner R. Mordecai raised concerns about recruiting mechanics from outside the Department's existing personnel structure.

Chief S. Carter acknowledged the Shop Department's efforts to recruit mechanics externally.

She reiterated the importance of maintaining operational efficiency, supporting departmental personnel, and ensuring that staffing decisions comply with established municipal procedures.

Training Division and Training Officer Coverage

Commissioner R. Mordecai asked about the status of Training Officer Lopes, who was on leave, and who would coordinate departmental training during his absence.

The Commission discussed the importance of maintaining training continuity and ensuring that firefighters continue receiving required instruction, certifications, and professional development opportunities.

Chief S. Carter stated that departmental training, officer development, and policy

updates remain priorities and will receive additional administrative support from Assistant Chief J. Atkinson.

Departmental Safety Meetings and Workplace Injuries

Commissioner R. Mordecai expressed concern about suspending the Department's regular safety meetings.

He questioned whether the absence of these meetings could contribute to workplace injuries and referenced a recent firefighter injury at Fire Station 5.

Commissioner R. Mordecai emphasized the importance of annual safety meetings, employee participation, hazard identification, and consistent follow-up on workplace safety concerns.

Chief S. Carter acknowledged that the department temporarily suspended formal safety meetings because of administrative staffing limitations.

However, she explained that safety oversight has continued through regular communication with Battalion Chiefs, review of employee injury reports, and coordination with the Town's Risk Management, Workers' Compensation, Public Works, and Building Maintenance personnel.

Chief S. Carter stated that she communicates frequently with Battalion Chiefs regarding injuries, workplace hazards, operational risks, and conditions requiring corrective action.

Regarding the injury at Fire Station 5, Chief S. Carter reported that she had addressed the matter with the appropriate municipal departments. The department ordered replacement doors and temporarily secured the affected area pending repairs.

She also reported that Assistant Chief J. Atkinson will coordinate departmental safety meetings and related administrative oversight.

Chief S. Carter anticipated that regular safety meetings would resume within approximately one to two weeks.

Paramedic Staffing and Medical Control

Commissioner R. Mordecai requested clarification regarding the number of paramedics currently employed by the Department and whether all paramedics had obtained medical control authorization.

He questioned whether any personnel were performing paramedic duties without the required authorization.

Chief S. Carter confirmed that the Department has 18 paramedics and that one individual had not yet obtained medical control authorization.

Chief S. Carter agreed to provide the Commission with regular updates identifying how many paramedics have obtained medical control and whose authorization remains pending.

She reiterated that the next two planned hires are expected to be paramedics.

Professionalism and Departmental Priorities

Chief S. Carter emphasized the importance of professionalism, mutual respect, and keeping the Department focused on public service.

Despite internal challenges and staffing concerns, she said the Department's primary responsibility remains protecting Hamden residents.

Chief S. Carter expressed confidence that adding Assistant Chief J. Atkinson and continuing collaboration with departmental personnel would strengthen operations and improve service delivery.

Correspondence Recognizing Fire Department Personnel

Chief S. Carter presented correspondence dated October 7, 2026, from a retired fire department chaplain expressing appreciation for the Hamden Fire Department's response to a serious motor vehicle accident on Route 10 on or about October 4, 2026.

The correspondence acknowledged the Department's compassionate and professional response to the accident, which resulted in one fatality and one individual sustaining injuries requiring continued recovery. The writer, a former fire chaplain in Meriden, Connecticut, and Charlotte, North Carolina, commended the responding personnel for their emergency care and credited their efforts as instrumental in the surviving individual's outcome.

Chief S. Carter shared the letter with the Commission to recognize the responding firefighters' dedication, professionalism, and commitment to public service.

E. Citizen Complaints

No additional citizen complaints were reported during the meeting.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Fire Commission Identification Badges and Apparel

Commissioner R. Mordecai revisited the discussion regarding identification badges for Fire Commissioners.

He referenced the September 2, 2026, Special Meeting, where the Commission discussed procedures for issuing and returning metal identification badges.

The proposed procedure would require Commissioners to acknowledge receipt of their badges and return them at the end of their terms so the Commission could reissue them to

future Commissioners.

Commissioner R. Mordecai emphasized the practical importance of Commissioners having appropriate identification when representing the Commission or assisting members of the public.

He described a recent incident in which he stopped to assist an elderly motorist whose vehicle had become disabled. He explained that an identification badge could have established his official affiliation and reassured the individual.

Chief S. Carter said she understood the importance of identification badges but had not yet received specific direction on the proposed issuance and return procedures.

She indicated that the Commission could develop a formal policy if directed.

Chief S. Carter also reported that the Commission ordered identification apparel and expected it to arrive.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of the 2027 Fire Commission Meeting Calendar

Chairman G. Tinney presented the proposed calendar for the 2027 Fire Commission meetings.

Regular meetings will continue to be held on the third Wednesday of each month.

The proposed meeting dates were as follows:

Month	Meeting Date
January	Wednesday, January 20, 2027
February	Wednesday, February 17, 2027
March	Wednesday, March 17, 2027
April	Wednesday, April 21, 2027
May	Wednesday, May 19, 2027
June	Wednesday, June 16, 2027
July	Wednesday, July 21, 2027
August	Wednesday, August 18, 2027
September	Wednesday, September 15, 2027
October	Wednesday, October 20, 2027
November	Wednesday, November 17, 2027
December	Wednesday, December 15, 2027

Commissioner T.A. Madera made a motion to approve the 2027 Fire Commission meeting calendar as presented. Commissioner R. Mordecai seconded the motion. There was no further discussion.

Vote by Roll Call:

Yes

Commissioner Gary Tinney, Chair
Commissioner Thomas A. Madera
Commissioner Robert Mordecai

No

Absent

Commissioner Samod Rankins
Commissioner Nancy Jordan

The motion passed unanimously.

Vote Summary: Yes 3, No 0, Abstentions 0, Absent 2

10. ADJOURNMENT

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.

https://hamden.zoom.us/rec/play/Cc87cQbowRIwuXdLcmXXu03rxt1-5USXTu9OD0xcj9AvQjGMCGCEQ20xo_y2AbwBICzHapYOmFSbcRd.n7n5r1Hig0OIUoE6?accessLevel=meeting&canPlayFromShare=true&from=my_recording&continueMode=true&oldStyle=true&componentName=rec-play&originRequestUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fhamden.zoom.us%2Frec%2Fshare%2FX5jjQNyvR8-E9tDcMrxbztG6Wqdgvt0Tt0nebFCI5kDxRVpUIFfKtQkJzuko0RdK.O5MNIMIW06Nk-pdT%3Ffrom%3Dhub